

The University of Leeds

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2014– 2015

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

Faculty / School of:	Faculty of Medicine and Health / School of Healthcare
Subject(s):	<i>Midwifery</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery / MSc in Midwifery Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives (HECS 5153M)
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	PG Diploma / MSc

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner

Completed report

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk.

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Quality Assurance**
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards

Matters for Urgent Attention

If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box

N/A

Only applicable in first year of appointment

Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?

N/A

For Examiners completing their term of appointment

Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School

N/A

Standards

1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

Since my appointment I am not aware of any changes being made to the *Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery / MSc in Midwifery* and the *Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives (HECS 5153M)* module. The Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes for both these programmes appear appropriate with the standard expected of postgraduate study.

2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes appear commensurate when comparing this level of study and professional award in other Higher Education Institutions including my own. The programmes reflect both national professional body and local university standards and regulations.

As a result of the findings of the Kings Fund into midwifery regulation in 2015, a decision has been made by the Nursing and Midwifery Council to withdraw the supervision of midwives from statute. Despite the *Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives (HECS 5153M)* module only being revised, validated and approved in March 2014 by the NMC and the University of Leeds, it is very sad and disappointing that already a decision has been made by the Local Education and Training Board to no longer commission places on this highly regarded and successful programme.

3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

I have continued to review a range of modules and assessments including essays, viva voce and Observed Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs). The marking and moderating process remains transparent and overall the work reflects a good academic standard. Students appear to have access to good tutorial support and in the main, feedback provided on their academic work is appropriate with feed forward evident to support future assessments.

This year, on **1st June 2015**, I had the opportunity to attend one of the study days with the midwives undertaking the *Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives* module where they were reflecting with the module leader on a personal supervisory episode that had been previously recorded on DVD. This teaching and learning approach effectively demonstrated their ability to be self-aware and critical of each other's performance whilst also empowering them with confidence for the challenges often faced by Supervisors of Midwives in practice, but within the safe environment of the university setting.

Meeting the Supervisors of Midwives students at the university also gave me an insight of their experiences of studying part-time and the teaching and learning opportunities and support available to them at Leeds.

4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

When compared with other institutions offering *Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery / MSc in Midwifery* (shortened) midwifery programmes and *Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives* programmes, the academic standard of the students' work assessed, is similar and variable across the grade bands. Those students achieving higher grades demonstrated their ability to synthesise and articulate their ideas and applied theoretical frameworks to their work more effectively. Weaker students tended to be more descriptive with their work containing a number of referencing and grammar / punctuation anomalies that require attention. These observations have continued to be common features in the sample of work reviewed in previous years, but are also apparent in other Higher Education Institutions, including my own.

5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum

During this academic year, on **16th January 2015**, I attended the OSCEs of the senior cohort. I sampled four of the students and two of the three stations: breech birth and resuscitation of the neonate. The achievement was satisfactory to good, with those students who achieved the higher grades, demonstrating their skills and articulating their knowledge and actions more effectively. All students I observed demonstrated safe practice. Marking was fair and undertaken in partnership with midwives from clinical practice.

On **23rd September 2014** I was taken to St James Hospital Maternity Unit with the Course Leader to the *Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery / MSc in Midwifery* where I met with student midwives and midwife mentors in clinical practice to gain a better insight into the quality and standard of the student experience in keeping with the QAA Standards for External Examining responsibilities. Of those staff and students I engaged with, they generally felt well supported by the university and the midwifery academic team.

6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year

It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.

It was pleasing to see that practising midwives from the local maternity units continue to be engaged in developing the assessment tool (scenarios) and taking part in the actual assessment of the OSCEs which demonstrates good practice between the HEI and local service providers. Furthermore, it would appear that staff in the maternity unit which I visited, were well aware of their link lecturer and the mechanism to contact the university should they require academic support or have any concerns about a student's performance.

7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching

This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.

The module Handbooks of each of the programme are revised on an annual basis with a constant review of the literature and research pertinent to the subject area. The importance of research evidence to inform academic work and clinical practice is highlighted through this medium with links to appropriate websites for more contemporary resources to support the students' academic and clinical development.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

N/A

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

9. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements

N/A

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.

Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.

As materials relating to Assessment Regulations and Process have been revised, these have been sent to me in a timely fashion both from Quality Assurance and from the Learning and Teaching Support, albeit there was very little during this academic year.

11. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?

The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.

All documentation relating to programmes / modules are sent to me electronically and I have access to BLACKBOARD to assess the students' written work online as the midwifery programmes have fully adopted the process of electronic submission of assessments. However as in the previous two years of my tenure, I have **never** received a marking schedule identifying when I am to expect work being ready to review. I would welcome this in terms of assisting me with planning my busy diary during the next academic year.

12. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?

I have received draft examination papers for *HECS 5262M Midwifery 1* and returned my comments which were considered by the midwifery academic team and incorporated into the final documentation as appropriate.

13. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?

I can easily access students' work online and select the scripts to review accordingly in a timely and more efficient fashion. Due to the cohort size remaining small, there is a tendency to review a larger proportion of work than I would with a larger cohort to ensure the assessment process is consistent and fair.
Overall feedback / feed forward to students is appropriate with clearly typed annotations being provided on the scripts due to the electronic assessment submission process. This consequently improves the legibility of student feedback / feed forward overall.

14. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?

N/A

15. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?

I attended the Board of Examiners (Progression and Awards) on **23rd September 2014** and on **12th May 2015** and found the operation and process appropriate on both occasions.

16. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?

There were not any specific issues relating to mitigating circumstances / medical evidence that were evident at the Boards I attended to make comment on this aspect.

Other comments

Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form

I wish to point out that for some reason the response to my previous Annual Report 2013/2014 was sent on 20th May 2015, was not received until 18th June 2015 as it had been sent to my previous employment which I left in March 2014. My report did in fact have my current employment details (<<>>) on the front page and I had had interim correspondence from Leeds in December 2014 to this address!

The Midwifery Academic team remain very accommodating in supporting my role as External Examiner and are receptive to my suggestions to further enhance the *Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery / MSc in Midwifery* and *Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives* programmes.

School of Healthcare

Baines Wing
University of Leeds
Leeds LS2 9JT



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Direct line: 0113

E-mail:

21 September 2015

Dear

**Re: External Examiner's Report Academic Year: 2014– 2015
Postgraduate Diploma in Midwifery/MSc in Midwifery
Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives (HECS 5300M)**

On behalf of the midwifery team I would like to thank you for your 2014-15 annual report for the above programmes. The team greatly values your input into these programmes through scrutiny of student work and gathering evidence from meeting students, clinical mentors and academic and administrative staff of the School.

The team is pleased to note your observations that the programmes' aims and intended learning outcomes are comparable with the regulatory and academic standards expected for this level of study. You also observed that the clinical mentors and students are 'well supported by the university and the midwifery academic team'; the team works hard to ensure that student journey is exceptional and is therefore pleased that this is evidenced by some of the learning and teaching activities that you have observed. The team ensures that the students are clinically and academically competent practitioners who deliver safe, evidence based care.

It is good to see that the student performance in theory and practice on the above programmes, albeit variable across the marking scale, is commensurate with that of other academic institutions offering similar programmes. Your comments in respect of the marking and moderating process, in particular regarding fairness and transparency, good academic standards and good quality feedback are welcomed. The team gives due consideration to the quality of student education including assessment feedback to further enhance student potential.

The team is pleased that the use of the Virtual Learning Environment has contributed to the effective execution of your role. However, it is sorry that you did not receive a marking schedule for this academic year, which had been arranged. The programme leader for the Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives sent you the programme documentation including the assessment schedule on 18 November 2014. Nonetheless the team will review its processes and ensure that this is re-addressed in future.

May I take this opportunity to reassure you that the School's decision to withdraw the provision of HECS 5300M Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives programme from its portfolio of education was not taken lightly. This decision was not driven by the Nursing and Midwifery Council's resolution, but occurred as a result of revision to the Local Supervisory Authority boundaries in England. Consequently, there are now three Universities which offer the Preparation of Supervisors of Midwives programme instead of two in this region. Discussion between the Local Supervisory Authority Midwifery Officer and the School confirmed that two providers of the programme would adequately meet the regional workforce needs. The School is disappointed that it will not continue to deliver the programme given its excellent track record; however we consider the decision was appropriate given the market forces.

continued/



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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21 September 2015

I do hope that you will accept the School's repeated apology that the response to your previous report was sent to your former address; this was, of course, an accidental oversight.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your report and hope that I have addressed all of the salient points you have raised. Thank you for the support you have given to the programmes to date; the academic and administrative teams have found it a pleasure working with you.

Yours sincerely